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**From:** Timothy Hissam [tphissam1@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Sunday, August 15, 2004 1:52 AM  
**To:** ADMIN-S&E  
**Subject:** Don't undermine NEPA protections

August 15, 2004

Department of Homeland Security  
Environmental Planning, Office of Safety and Environment Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Ridge and Homeland Security staff,

I oppose the Department of Homeland Security's current proposal for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act. The proposal would allow too many exclusions from NEPA and could close off government activities that have previously operated in the public eye.

One of NEPA's purposes is to allow public review of agency actions that may adversely affect the environment. The department's proposal would impede that purpose with its overly broad use of categorical exclusions. While categorical exclusions are useful for exempting routine activities that pose no risk of environmental harm, some of the proposed exclusions involve types of activities that could cause significant harm.

Although I support the mission of the Department of Homeland Security, the breadth of the undefined categories of information that would be withheld from public view is a tremendous expansion of the current policy that allows only classified information to be withheld from NEPA documents.

The proposal goes well beyond what is necessary to protect national security, and risks destroying the very democratic ideals that the Department of Homeland Security was created to protect. I urge you to limit the use of categorical exclusions and the withholding of information as narrowly as possible.

Sincerely,

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